

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9173

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE VIENTIANE 4190

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SNAR, US, LA

SUBJECT: POSSIBLE SAODAP FUNDING FOR CAMP COBRA

REF: STATE 104689

1. MISSION VERY MUCH APPRECIATES SAODAP'S WILLINGNESS IN PRINCIPLE TO PROVIDE PARTIAL FUNDING FOR CAMP COBRA SUMMER CAMP IN VIENTIANE. FULL JUSTIFICATION FOR SUCH FUNDING WAS POUCHED TO DEPARTMENT MAY 20 IN FORM OF DAKAN TO COWAN MEMORANDUM.

2. IN RESPONSE TO POINTS RAISED REFTEL, JUSTIFICATION FOR SAODAP ASSISTANCE TO AMERICAN COMMUNITY IN VIENTIANE HAS ALWAYS BEEN CAST IN TERMS OF POTENTIAL, RATHER THAN EXISTING, NARCOTICS PROBLEM. VIENTIANE HAS TRADITIONALLY BEEN A CITY WHERE ILLICIT DRUGS, RANGING FROM MARIJUANA TO HEROIN, ARE READILY AVAILABLE. WHILE THERE HAS BEEN SOME EXPERIMENTATION BY TEENAGERS HERE IN THE PAST, WE HAVE BEEN FORTUNATE TO AVOID, SO FAR, A SEVERE NARCOTICS PROBLEM SUCH AS HAS AFFLICTED MANY OTHER AMERICAN COMMUNITIES OVERSEAS.

3. MAJOR PROBLEM IN VIENTIANE FOR TEENAGERS IS BOREDOM. FEW RECREATIONAL FACILITIES ARE AVAILABLE. BOTH DRUGS AND A SEAMY NIGHTCLUB SCENE POSE UNFORTUNATE ALTERNATIVES TO BORED YOUTH. CAMP COBRA WAS ESTABLISHED TO SERVE NOT ONLY THE YOUNG MEMBERS OF THE AMERICAN COMMUNITY HERE, BUT JUST AS IMPORTANTLY, TO GIVE TEENAGERS SOMETHING CONSTRUCTIVE TO DO DURING SUMMER MONTHS.

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NORMALLY, CAMP ORGANIZERS WOULD TRY TO MAKE SUCH AN OPERATION AS

EFFICIENT AS POSSIBLE BY KEEPING STAFF, AS WELL AS SALARIES FOR COUNSELORS, AS LOW AS POSSIBLE. IN OUR SITUATION OPPOSITE IS TRUE; WE WISH TO EMPLOY AS MANY TEENAGERS IN THE CAMP COBRA PROGRAM AS POSSIBLE.

4. MOREOVER, WITH PATHET LAO PRESENT IN VIENTIANE TENSIONS UNDER WHICH TEENAGERS LIVE ARE GREATER THAN IN THE PAST. WE BELIEVE THAT YOUNG PEOPLE HERE SHOULD BE GIVEN EVERY OPPORTUNITY TO KEEP OUT OF TROUBLE - BOTH DRUGS AND OTHERWISE - BY MAKING CAMP COBRA EFFORT FOR SUMMER OF 74 ONE WHICH SERVES THE NEEDS OF THE ENTIRE COMMUNITY, BUT IN PARTICULAR, THE NEEDS OF THE NARCOTICS-PRONE TEENAGERS. IF WE ARE ABLE TO GIVE THE TEENAGERS SOMETHING WORTHWHILE AND RENUMERATIVE TO DO, WE BELIEVE THAT SAODAP'S INVESTMENT IN THIS PROGRAM WILL HAVE BEEN FULLY JUSTIFIED.

5. WE ARE OPPOSED TO HAVING A DRUG COUNSELLOR PER SE AT CAMP COBRA FOR REASONS MENTIONED PARA 4 REFTTEL; ALSO BECAUSE WE DO NOT FEEL THAT SUCH A PERSON IS SPECIFICALLY NEEDED. LIKEWISE, WE BELIEVE THAT FOLLOW-UP PROGRAM DURING THE SCHOOL YEAR IS UNNECESSARY GIVEN EFFECTIVE WAY IN WHICH AMERICAN SCHOOL AND MEDICAL UNIT IN VIENTIANE HAVE BEEN COPING WITH PROBLEM TO DATE. SAODAP SHOULD BE INFORMED THAT PARENTS OF CHILDREN ATTENDING CAMP COBRA DO ALREADY CONTRIBUTE TO FINANCES OF CAMP, BUT PARENTS OF TEENAGE COUNSELORS DO NOT.

6. DEPARTMENT'S ASSISTANCE IN THIS MATTER IS GREATLY APPRECIATED.
WHITEHOUSE

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